



A MINISTER'S READING

OWEN H. GATES

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By ✓

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A Minister's Reading

The message of this paper is to ministers in the pastorate, and it is as nearly a personal message as these ministers will allow it to be. No apology is made for an attempt at directness and plainness. The second person is a very satisfactory construction to use when men are face to face with each other in conversation; it answers very well over miles of space when there is a wire stretched between them, or when a letter carrier acts as messenger; let it creep into the printed message if it will.

Recreative reading is not under discussion in the following pages. It is true that our reading of this sort ought to be improved, but if you attempt this conscientiously, the reading loses its recreative character at once. Moreover the recreative element is present more or less in much of our serious reading. We like one book and dislike another, and usually read the first and postpone the second. Our present concern, however, is only with the serious part of our reading, and this will be treated as the chief means of a minister's training.

If you are satisfied with your preliminary training, and with the training you are gaining from year to year in the midst of your parish work, you are in an admirable situation to aid your brethren in their struggles after what you have secured. Such a self-satisfied man, how-

ever, does not exist, and while I do not flatter myself that all will find help from these words, yet the appeal is to all, in one way or another to apply yourselves to the task of adding to your mental training as the years pass.

Among ministers those are in greatest apparent need of consideration who have not had the usual preliminary training in college and seminary; and in this statement there is intended to be an emphasis upon the word "apparent". It may be that training for the ministry has more puzzling problems than training in and by the ministry, but audience and argument must be different if one is to discuss that question, and for the present we leave it out of account. Moreover, while it is not clear that men who lack the usual training for the ministry are in a position to respond more quickly and with better results to such suggestions as will find a place here, their interests are most to the front, and will be primarily in mind in the pages that follow.

What can such a man do to remedy the defects of his condition? Much in his environment operates automatically upon him to improve him in this respect, and on the other hand much operates to make his condition more serious as the years come and go. Of these unconscious influences we do not speak. What can a man do of purpose, positively, intentionally, to improve himself intellectually? This is the question which you ask yourselves constantly, and this is the question upon which we propose to think together for a little while. It is well for a man to feel his needs, but unless the way opens a little now and then toward the partial satisfaction of

his needs, the outlook is gloomy indeed. This message is sent out in the hope that a little added light may result, and a great deal of added courage.

We cannot blind ourselves to the many discouragements that come to a minister in his intellectual life. He feels the handicap under which he labors in the performance of his professional duties, and he feels it all the more when he throws himself into the struggle to throw off the burden; who can fail to understand this? There is very often a tinge of sadness felt by such a man in the midst of his pastoral duties; a bit of envy of those who are free for their studies. It is certainly not an uncommon thing for a minister to feel that a student or a teacher has a great advantage in the matter of study.

The most obvious difficulty under which a man labors, is lack of time. It is true, a minister is a very busy man, and the demands of a parish take so much of his time that there seems to be very little left to spend upon the direct training of which I speak. But then other men are also busy, and the complaint of lack of time is one that is common to well nigh every ambitious man. Every scholar in the schools feels just as keenly the limitations of his opportunity in this respect. He has not time to follow out one tenth of the subjects that crowd upon his attention. It is a very minute subject that one can finish, and, for that matter, it is a very minute man who thinks he has finished even that.

Another difficulty, however, is deeper seated than this lack of time. It is a question of the sphere of thought in which one moves. The

character of the work that engrosses him is such that a minister often feels incapacitated for the work that a school does. This may be true. A school boy can do a school boy's work better than a man in the ministry can do that boy's work. But what both are aiming at is mental growth and increase of power, and the real question is who has the advantage in this respect. There is truly a great difference between the mental work of a boy or man in school and that of a man in the ministry, and no good can come from ignoring the fact. Indeed our whole argument is based on the assumption of such a difference, actual and proper. And really the advantage lies with the grown man and not with the student at school. Let us consider whether this is so.

Schooling is good; it is essential to a successful ministry. No, not quite essential, witness now and then a man who succeeds without it. It is so nearly essential that a man is very foolish who thinks he may be the exception and still win success. Would that every minister had the best schooling that the country affords. If he cannot have it for himself, he ought to influence every young man who seeks the ministry to get the best regardless of cost or sacrifice. But after all, schooling is only a means to an end; a good means, but not the only one. Efficiency in service is the goal of our effort, in whatever calling we serve. Education in the true sense, culture of the whole man, power of mind and heart, these are not the same as schooling.

The period of school days is a limited one. A growing man soon gets beyond it, and once be-

yond it he cannot come back to it with unmingled success or profit.

A mature man has passed beyond college or seminary conditions. He may not have his diploma, but he is beyond that stage of work. He has graduated from the scholastic point of view to the practical. If he should find the way open to go to a college or a seminary, he would find that his thought would be cast in a mould very different from that of the ordinary college student. This can be verified by anyone who has made the attempt, and by teachers who have instructed such men. That is a fine ambition and heroic self-denial which prompts a man already in the pastorate to give up a year or more of his time to work in a seminary or college; would that there were more who were as ready and as eager to develop their mental powers. And yet such a course seems to be a mistake, for many reasons, and especially for this, that a man who has passed into the life of a minister is no longer fitted for just that kind of discipline which a school involves. Let no one antagonize the statement for fear that it involves loss of caste among scholars, or the confession of inferiority, or the acknowledgement of defeat or failure in life. So far from claiming this, or from allowing another to claim it, or from permitting the one concerned to admit it for himself, the writer insists that the mental attitude into which one is forced by the demands of a pastorate is the attitude of a mature manhood, and that he should spend no sighs or vain regrets over defects in early work, but glory in his present advantages for work.

There are men who seem never to get beyond the stage of going to school. Their mental de-

velopment seems to have been arrested at that point and when they become dissatisfied or ambitious they know no better or more scholarly thing—God pity them—than to take another year at school. That is not a healthy mental attitude. It is a mistake. It is not wise, it is not scholarly. The scholarly thing, the scientifically correct thing for a man to do who is along in years and is in the midst of the responsibilities of life, is to pursue his education by other and different methods. The methods are not of the school, but they need not be inferior, they certainly promise better results for the grown man because they are more in harmony with his matured powers.

The grown man takes the initiative, the school boy does not. This is manhood's prerogative, the boy has not attained to it yet. The young man at school "takes" studies as he takes the measles. They are going the rounds, and he is in their path. With the grown man, his mental work takes on a moral phase, because he has to make his own choice of work.

It rests with him whether he studies at all. And that is why a minister commonly neglects his study while he is at work. There is no one and no thing to keep him everlastingly at it. If there were a command out of the heavens, "In the day that ye neglect your books ye shall surely die," men might come to time. But even then, there is the best of authority for the suspicion that the serpent would be there with his denial of the fact. And we do not die that same day, and we believe the serpent that we shall not die. We do not seem to mind the fact that we die mentally a little later; our people know we do, our pros-

pects for future work are killed, and when at last we become alive to the fact that we are dead, when we "feel dead", as the boy said, we say we must stop work a year and go to school some more! And the trouble that is we have not made our own school in the midst of our work, have not learned our lessons as we go along. The remedy is, not to quit work, but really to begin work along the right lines. If it is terribly true that a man must work mentally in order to grow mentally, it is also just as true that if he does work mentally he will grow mentally. The law is not limited to work done in a college or seminary, but extends to the parsonage and parish as well.

Be it repeated, the minister differs from the scholar in school by having it in his own hands to study or not as he pleases. Assuming then that the minister is ambitious to continue his education, what shall be the subject of his study? Here it will be as before; the man must decide for himself, as he decided his field of labor, as he decided upon his wife, as a grown man decides everything. More narrowly, a minister's study grows naturally out of the practical needs of his work, and the results sought are naturally practical. That which is natural cannot well be antagonized or ignored; that will result in loss of efficiency. Work along the lines of least resistance, for that means best results and greatest economy of effort.

A minister's study naturally grows out of his practical work. In his study he tries to reach certain definite results, and those results are practical results. And it need not be with a sigh that

he realizes that his work and interest must be mainly practical. Rather let him pity the man, if there be any one, who does not have this practical interest, and, for himself, thank God and take courage. For what else would you have and be? Would you deal with theories, and be theoretical? And what is a theory? It is a generalization from observed facts. And will you stop with a theory, in which this kind of study naturally terminates? That is impossible for you. The study may terminate there, but the student does not. The man goes right on to the practical. For is a man's *interest* not in the practical? Does not every theory have its justification in the practical if at all? It grows out of the practical, it in turn has its end in the practical. It is tolerated only because it explains action and looks again toward action. The important thing is action. That is a truism for men who are devoting themselves to the ministry of Christ. They do not well to sigh for the theoretical learning that characterizes the school, for the important thing is the practical learning of practical life.

This great world is busy, busy; always at work, and never still. The tides rise and fall and never cease. Animal life begins and varies but never stops. The souls of men are incessantly active; we love and hate and hope and fear; we sin and repent, we struggle with the tempter, we vanquish our foe. We are never at rest. And no two souls are in the same mould; no two acts are the outcome of the same character. We change, we change, for better or worse, but change always.

And he who learns theoretically takes a handful of these facts, or a handful of these souls, goes away by himself apart, where it is quiet, and where it is still — and that must be away from life — among his specimens and bottles and labels, and thinks and speculates and theorizes. And still over yonder, just out of his hearing, the throb of this old world goes on never ceasing. While he theorizes about a chemical formula, something happens out in the world that upsets his theory, fortunate if he happens to discover it! While he dissects and analyzes the soul and psychic phenomena, men are suffering and dying. He formulates a rule according to which men will act, and they act without rule and against rule, and he knows it not. They discuss God and exhaust themselves in describing him; they invent a terminology to state — not God, but their theories about him, and out in the world he is working, doing the impossible, saving men that are damned by the theologies. Advanced thinkers take a step forward now and then, modifying their theories here and there, oh! so cautiously; they propound the novelty to the world, and lo! you and I know that God's dear children have known this all along. You and I know that the babes in our parishes have the revelation, and are living trustfully, happily, safely, in his presence, and love him careless of what the theologians think.

And yet theories are not unnecessary. We must theorize. We must provide clothes for our children; every few months a new suit, or piece down the old! For the boys and girls are growing. There will always be work for seamstress

and tailor. Only beware lest they assume in their pride that *they* make boys grow.

You who know the toils and struggles of men, you who have wept with those who weep, who have been on the mount where some homely obscure soul was transfigured with divine light, what would you? Would you leave all this and go to school again, forsooth to freshen up a bit? Would you leave the infinite variety of experience and conversation and go at your text books again, to get out of the rut? Would you leave the novel questions from the children of your parish, questions more puzzling than any the scribes and Pharisees could propound to Jesus, and think to sharpen your wits upon the age old questions of the class room? The freshness is all with you, the variety is all with you, the mental drill is all with you. Perhaps you might not be quick with the lessons of the school; certainly the professor would fail often at the tasks in your laboratory. Envy not the scholar at his books; rejoice in your opportunities and use them.

A theory results from a generalization from facts, and that means that each fact loses itself in the mass. It is reduced to that colorless awful thing, an average. There is no room in a theory for a deviation from the normal. What does the expression mean, "It is all right in theory, in practice it will not work," used of a new motor, an airship, a sociological principle, an ecclesiastical rule? It means that there will be such variations in the conditions under which the principle will have to work, that uniformity in operation is impossible. A certain crime bears such relation to another that its punishment

ought to be, say, imprisonment for three months. In the autumn two men commit this crime. One does it on purpose to be sent up for the winter, and so secure board and lodging from the state. The other does it in the hope to keep his family from suffering during the winter. If he were imprisoned, those dependent upon him would be destitute, and become public charges. The normal punishment of three months' imprisonment is out of the question in both cases. In theory correct, in practice it may not suit one tenth of the cases that arise. The minister is in a position to know these individual cases. He sees not the crime alone, but the criminal, and he knows that that theory must not be uniformly applied.

Educational leaders make a study of child life and training, and evolve a magnificent curriculum for common schools. It is tried in country towns and is not successful. Why? For a hundred reasons. For the prices paid, no teachers can be hired competent to carry it into effect. No school committees know enough to adopt it. No two scholars in the school are near enough of the same grade of capability or training to constitute a group to be practiced upon. School equipment is lacking. Children are kept away by storms or sugaring or fair or hoeing. Practically it will not work. The illustration is taken from the day school; almost the same words could be used of the Sunday school, but if that had been taken as the illustration, the answer would have been promptly made that the Sunday school is good for nothing anyway.

Take another instance showing the difference between the theoretical and the practical, even

when the former tries to be practical. A student, say a theologian, thinks it wise, as it is, to take a course in manual training in a school before going out to his work. Here is something practical at last, even if theology is not. He shows you a specimen of the work he has done, perhaps a well fitted dove-tailed joint. Under what conditions did he perform that nice piece of work? He had the best of lumber, straight grained, old growth, well seasoned. He had a solid bench and a good bench screw. His saws were kept well filed and set by a trained saw-smith. He had the choice of half a dozen well sharpened planes. He had try squares and rules and gauges; the best of glue and varnish; brushes and sand paper and pumace stone and everything else he needed or thought he needed. And he was getting practical training, a very desirable thing! Visit that man five years later in a distant home mission field. You see no such joints in his home made bookcase or baby's crib, because he has none of those many appliances which after all kept the manual training in the school from being thoroughly practical. The man showed more real skill in making over his Larkin soap box into a case for his few books, than he had shown years before in finishing that dove-tailed joint. It is no trick at all to theorize, that is cheap. It is a different matter to carry on the practical work of life with some slight approach to the smoothness and strength of which the books speak.

Theoretical training, speculation, is not an end in itself. The theoretical exists only for the sake of the practical. Mathematics is a pure science.

It deals with the most abstract of concepts. Its processes are involved beyond all power of mind to grasp them. Why do men study mathematics? You cross a fine bridge over a wide stream. They have put their mathematics into that. You cross the ocean. The mammoth steamer comes in sight of land within half a mile of its captain's reckoning; because in the nautical almanac there are pages of abstruse astronomical and mathematical computations. It requires men of great training to compile those books, but they do it for the sake of the steamer and sailing craft. And after all the honor goes, not to the compiler, but to the master of the boat who uses the book. You and I, even with the book, would have wrecked the boat before it was away from the dock. A few things the captain can discover in the almanac, but these are only the general facts valid for all boats and crews. In addition to these, which many men can know, he must know a mass of facts which no other man can know. He observes the particulars of storm and wind and tide, of current and spread of sail and behavior of engine and temper of crew. It is his honorable and unique task to combine all these things that never can be reduced to rule, into a practice. And this is the minister's task. He has at his service the theories of so called scholars, and their learned treatises, he takes them for what they are worth to him, uses them as far as they go, and then he really begins for the first time the still more honorable and arduous task of working out his particular problems. The credit belongs, if we must make comparison, with him who makes

the connection between the general statement, or the theory, and the practical situation that confronts him.

What subject, then, should a minister study? - The general answer is, he should study one that is connected with his particular work, and will help him do it better. There of course lies his interest, and an intelligent interest is in this matter well nigh authoritative. For an earnest man there is a wealth of interesting subjects close at hand, subjects in themselves interesting and important, or subjects of peculiar interest to him for some special reason, perhaps local and temporary. He must not think it a special virtue to pass by these interesting themes and choose some uninteresting subject, because it is in the air just now, or because he ought to study it, or because twenty years ago in the seminary he resolved that some day he would study it.

Perhaps it does not matter so much what a man studies, just as it is not a life and death matter what he preaches about. If he is not the right kind himself, his subject cannot save him, and if he is of the right stuff, no matter what subject he selects, he will put the whole gospel into his sermon. So in the selection of a definite subject for study, the chief thing is actually to work upon some subject. The tonic is in the working, not in the subject.

As in the decision of the question whether he will study at all or not, and in the choice of his subject, a minister has the burden and the prerogative of a grown man, so in the method in which he will do his work he must choose for himself. But here too it is obvious that he is not

likely to get the best results by imitating closely the methods of the schools.

Much of the work in a school is imposed in order to secure for the pupil the mental discipline that will result. It can be assumed that the minister is not in exactly the same need of mental discipline as the school boy. The earnest boy comes to his task with an excess of vigor. Deliberately he for himself, or the master for him, chooses the hard path for this very reason. An example is assigned to be worked out, the answer to which is perfectly well known to teacher, and very likely to student. He reads a page of Latin which exists in a translation vastly better than the boy can produce. But the minister would be foolish to disregard the work of others already complete. If it is Latin or Greek or Hebrew, he does well to get all out of the English that he can, and go to his Latin or Greek or Hebrew for what cannot be learned from the translation. If he can find an answer ready to his example, he does well to take it and press on to the problem, or the part of the problem, that still awaits solution.

The school boy learns his lesson out of a book. That is the only way he can learn it. Really he does not learn it at all; he simply commits to memory what some one else says of it. To a mature man these sayings of others do not have the same importance. They come to him as propositions and not as proofs. If he is less quick to remember, he takes some steps that the boy does not take, and he is the greater gainer.

Both study history. The boy learns names, dates and figures. The man cannot so easily do

this ; but he gets more out of his history than the boy does, because the actors are real to him. He might have been in their place, acted upon and acting by motives and influences with which he is familiar, the boy not. The boy's note-book will contain many things that the man will not be quick enough to catch and record ; the man will not worry overmuch over failing to remember a certain class of facts. Other things, important to both, the boy will carefully note, the grown man fixes them not on paper but at once in—I will not say memory, but in his experience.

And this is really the gist of the whole matter ; the grown man has a fund of experience which the boy has yet to acquire. The latter has to hold a fact in memory until at some future time he reaches the point in experience when he can use the fact. With the grown man, memory is reduced to the minimum ; the new fact takes its place as a part of his experience. It is the direct influence of the current of other life upon his own, with no storage battery to mediate between that outside life and his.

The boy is getting knowledge ready to be converted into wisdom when the issue arises which will demand it. The grown man's prerogative is to apply his knowledge at once to practical ends and the effect on him is to make wise. To feel the need of storing up knowledge against a possible demand in some undefined future is not in harmony with other characteristics of maturity. The methods of the schools are of course correct for persons of school age, but as the boy

grows up they give place, and must give place, to those more natural to the mature mind.

Now and then some earnest ministerial brother suggests work for himself upon some subject which, from the very form in which the proposition is worded, is obviously a hold-over from seminary days. The desire is very easily comprehended, and is entirely praiseworthy. There was a gap in the course of study, or the student was ill, or the professor did not complete his lectures, or the student simply did not study as he ought, and now he realizes he has lost something, and laudably proposes to make it up, even if he has his diploma all safe. In such a case, one wonders if in making the plan, the brother has not ignored the contribution of the years to his education; the chances are that he knows his lack of precisely that academic course by a sheer act of memory, or else by a hiatus of memory; or perhaps he made a note of the lack five or ten years ago when he came out of school, lest he forget. He has, we will say, five years of experience in the ministry. Review those five years slowly and honestly, brother, and tell me whether they have been profitless years. Do you know less now or more? You say you have lost all your Hebrew and forgotten most of your church history? Perhaps your Hebrew was a blue baby and could not live. But think of "the expulsive power of a new affection." Has not this forgetting of Hebrew and dates and names been caused by the crowding in of something else? If you are in doubt, take out that old sermon written with Hebrew Bible at your elbow, and garnished with the choicest illustrations drawn

from history, if not from "Historical Lights"! Can you not write better now? Are you not stronger mentally?

It is ungrateful indeed to ignore so heedlessly the educating value of practical work. It is not an enemy to the mental development of a minister. It is and ought to be its inspiration. Honor the every day task by bringing to it your best work, and you will be honored by it as you go away from it when you have completed it, with new strength of head as well as of heart.

Let me not be misunderstood. There are two classes of men who come back now and then to the seminary for a day or two. Both have been thoughtful and studious since they left, but they are different. One presents a new view which he has elaborated all by himself, we will say, of the location of the garden of Eden. Of course this is not a true instance, for there cannot be a new view until we get a new earth; but the man is real. I have seen him. Or he suggests a novel scheme of chronology of the gospels. And I have seen the professor trip up that scholar as neatly and I fear as gleefully, though he may not know it, as the small boy with a wire trips up a man on April Fool's day. The other man comes back too; there are more of him than of the other, but it takes longer to find him out; he gracefully acknowledges the courtesy when a Hebrew Bible is handed to him opened to the correct chapter and verse, evidently enjoys most the subjects which deal with human nature whether unredeemed or redeemed, and sometimes brings out of his store house veritable riches of suggestion, evidently the result of severe mental

application. Or if he is craving advice or help, the very statement of his perplexities proves the clearness and the profoundness of his insight. The burdens of pastoral care can transform one as with a magic wand so that the one time student of seemingly uncertain future becomes a man before whom we stand in awe as in the presence of a great mystery.

As a minister you are handicapped indeed in many ways in your attempt to study as a student studies in school. Then study as a student can study in the field. Do your daily work in a scholarly way. Let every call be a laboratory exercise; of course not doing it clumsily, but doing it nevertheless. Study the development of the child's mind and his moral nature, and learn to know it better than the books will teach it. Admit your mistakes, account for them to yourself, and do not make the same mistake twice from lack of careful study of conditions. If you go to candidate in a church where every man, woman, and child is hard at work on the farm or in the kitchen the whole week through except while he is sitting, and nodding, under your preaching, do not a second time at most, urge them to take gymnastic exercise to keep their bodies in good condition! "Use tact," we say; and what is that but studying conditions and adapting yourself to them? There is first class mental discipline in this, and an added result of increased strength and assurance will come from it. Do this and you will sometime become reconciled to the gradual disappearance of Hebrew from your many accomplishments.

The question is often asked of a minister, "Do you offer prayer when making pastoral calls?" What is your answer? Is your practice in this matter the result of accident, or of a strict theory, or of a scholarly study of the question in the course of your pastorate? Such a study will lead far along toward a thorough examination of the value and effect of prayer, the attitude of the mind towards it, its effect upon unsympathetic hearers. It may be that some good sister, punctilious to a degree, needs to be shown by her minister's omitting the customary prayer, that the formal prayer is but one of the many ways of approaching God; that sometimes the prayerful spirit is to be taken for granted. Just what is her need, and how can it be best met?

The word "practical" is too often used as if it were a synonym of unscholarly. And it is frequently the so called scholars who err in this respect. But the practical is not necessarily unscholarly. It is not the result of accident, as if one stumbled blindly upon some great result. It is the finished product of theory. It is wisdom. It is abiding in its results because it is flexible in its methods. It aims with true single mindedness at the true end of all action. On the other hand, the word is misused also by unscholarly men. Finding exact study an impossibility, they are prone to exploit their own achievements by saying that they are self made men, practical and direct. And the implications in this boast are as faulty as in the other case.

Will it make the matter clearer to take a concrete illustration? A pastor is often called upon to take definite position on Seventh Day Baptist

doctrines. He may treat the question in a scholarly way, from the view point of theory, by which means he will satisfy mainly those who agreed with him from the outset. On the other hand he may treat it from the point of view of the practical gain to be secured by a general acceptance or rejection of the doctrines mentioned. Such a course of thought broadens the outlook. It puts things where they belong in life. It goes to the bottom of purpose in conduct. It is not unscholarly, but allows and requires as keen insight and as ready wit as a real scholar can bring to the task. It furnishes, moreover, the only possible common ground upon which men can stand to meet the common foes of all.

Many ministers express the wish to make a thorough study of sociology. What is the best way to begin? First is he really interested in the study? Possibly he proposes it because it is so much talked about in these days, while his assumed interest is not real. If it is real, has it not arisen because of his own immediate social problems? Sociology is a well ordered knowledge of society. What do we ministers know or want to know of society except as it is made up of little groups in one of which our lot is cast? Not one in a thousand has time or talent or patience for the theoretical questions of the study or would be helped by such study as would result in the formulation of a theory or in the cataloguing of a mass of facts. Our real interest begins with the men and women, and ends with the men and women; and if there is need of an examination of theories, we tolerate the examina-

tion because of their practical bearings. If I were a country pastor, I would not exchange places with any professor of sociology or any habitué of a library in the attempt to secure an opportunity for social study. With you it is concrete, personal, vital; with him it is theoretical, impersonal, dead. To him Mr. A and B are unknown persons. Suppose them vicious, he is isolated from their vice. Are they virtuous, he is unaffected by any contagion of virtue. With you it is not Mr. A, but Pete Jones the drunkard; Sally Smith the prostitute. You know them, and knew their parents before them. Your study of sociology begins with your own community, but it cannot remain limited to it; for the character, mode of life, taste, intelligence of your parishioner results from generations of influences, and you must follow up these streams one by one to discover what each one is contributing. And so you study history, the history of the men and women to whom you are devoting your lives.

Without doubt you have facts in your own community as interesting and illuminating and varied as those that find a record in the great books. Most certainly you have material in your own parish more rewarding and interesting and varied than it has ever entered into your heart to conceive of. A minister has little idea how far along he can get in the study of sociology by beginning in this simple way.

Something like this is what I mean by saying that a minister's study grows out of his practical work, and the results which he tries to reach by it are practical. So the minister's real training is in the ministry, and in large part, by means of

the ministry. This is inseparable from the fact that the ministry is a practical calling. And often the seminary graduate has the harder work, by very reason of his being such, to adjust himself to the situation. It is worth while insisting that this phrase mean, just what it says, that is, adjust himself to the situation; adjust his theories to the situation; adjust his training too; this is the meaning and not the reverse, as if the situation must be adjusted to his theories and training.

And now it is full time that I insist that I have no quarrel with the schools, or with those who are in the schools, or have been in them long enough to complete the whole round of them, with all their studies. Such a man asks if then he has no advantage over another not so trained. He certainly has, with his seven or more years of training. Must he then go into the pastorate to get a training? Like Paul's Jew, he has great advantage every way. But like that same Jew, who must become a follower of Jesus before he can enjoy the fruits of his training, the college and seminary man, as he leaves the school to become a pastor, is bound to undergo a decided and complete transformation, a true conversion. What can more fittingly express the change than the words "a new birth"? For he comes suddenly into a new world. He thought he understood the Bible; a few months in the pastorate convince him, if he is not unusually stubborn, that he did not understand it. He finds it has a power that was not touched upon in the lectures on Biblical Introduction. His professors bade him cultivate the homiletic habit, and he thought that was something specially connected with writing ser-

mons. He discovers that he must first begin the habit, and then cultivate it. And what is that habit but the making of all his thought and observation converge upon the whole great purpose of the ministry, which is the salvation of men, and not the writing of sermons? It is the learning to live and move and have being in the kingdom of God. He thought he had a theology, and called himself after one or another of the great names of divinity. He discovers before long that he is making a theology for himself. We hear men say that their belief has changed very greatly, that they do not believe what they once were taught; and they often imagine that their minds work very uniquely, and that their beliefs are peculiar. In all probability the change is no greater than ordinarily occurs; it is probably not at all radical, but the natural fruit brought forth in the new world of his experience. All men have beliefs peculiar to themselves, and many of the so called unique views are common to all thoughtful men. The mistake is in supposing that everybody except ourselves is going on believing like the professors' lectures, or the great divines of the church. It is a new world indeed into which the student is ushered when he takes his first pastorate.

The advantage of a trained minister consists in this, that when he comes face to face with the practical problems of his pastorate, novel to him as inevitably as to his comrade, he may search in his memory or in his note-book, and possibly find some word which may be of service to him, so that he will not need to go and find some other counsellor to give him this particular message.

This is possible, but it does not always fall out in exactly this wise. Note-books are notoriously imperfect, and always so at the important juncture. And then, even with seminary advice at the elbow, it requires no little skill to transform the memory and the note-book knowledge into real pastoral power; and not all possess this skill. Knowledge is power when the boy is being urged to get knowledge. When the man, possessed of great knowledge, is wondering why his life is not more fruitful, he is likely to revise the proverb materially.

It requires much grace for a man with all the pride of his seminary course and classroom knowledge, to admit that so far as practical efficiency is concerned, he begins with no more, and often with less, power than his unschooled neighbor. But it is the truth, and if he at length forges ahead in the race, it will be because he accepts the situation and learns the new strange lessons more quickly because of his passed studies. If he becomes a successful pastor, it is not his seminary training which accomplishes it. I have seen a farmer ploughing, wearing a frock coat that he used to wear to church, perhaps the one that he bought for his wedding years ago. And many a man is to be seen attempting to till his part of the Master's field, with a theology that is as incongruous as the farmer's frock coat. And yet the seminary is not to blame, as perhaps we shall see later. The man is no longer a student at school; he is a man at work and he must adjust himself to the practical.

In the seminary he has been emphasizing the theoretical side; now he emphasizes the practical.

and in all probability the pendulum will swing too far in this direction. He has been thrown overboard, and sinks for a little while; but he rises again and can keep his head above the water in which he is destined to swim. And he must keep his head above the water. He must look out beyond himself. In short, he must study, and books and reading are the apparatus that the grown man is to use in the study that he proposes to do by himself. His parish needs furnish him the topics, rather definitely, though in bewildering variety. Personal interest is assumed, an interest strong enough to tide him over the days when study goes hard; over the blue Mondays, over indigestion and the like. By means of books the man passes beyond this personal individual range into the broader field. They save him from provincialism, from the deadly half-bushel circuit. They multiply his experience. Their function is not to do away with the need of thinking, it is to make him think harder. If his aim in study were to come to a broad generalization, to philosophize, then books might mark the final stage of study. His aim, however, is not theorizing, but practical effects, and after the book stage, as before it, must come his personal independent handling of the subject for the benefit of his work. He must get the thought of the writer into his head, and then by words, and plans, and by example and act, get the value of it into his parish work.

One of the prerequisites for the intelligent application of our knowledge to the tasks of the day, is the formation of opinions. Other things being equal, the opinion will be crude in inverse

ratio to the wideness and the ripeness of a man's experience and observation. The crudity does not appear to a man until later modification of the opinion reveals it. On some subjects he will be unable to formulate any opinion. Some subjects seem simple because one has not studied enough to know their perplexities; others seem perplexing at first and one does not even venture to formulate an opinion. In the one case the first opinion may prove to be too pronounced. In the other case the timidity ought to yield at once to at least a tentative opinion.

Very clearly a minister is not sufficient in his own experience even for the smallest problems that come to him. He must get the benefit of the views of others. He needs help and so must read. What does he read for? To compare opinions, to widen his horizon, to avoid mistakes that he is liable to make but of which he knows nothing in advance. Read, not to make the reading take the place of thinking, but to make you think; and to make your own thinking at once the harder, because the more profound, and the easier because the clearer at every step; and to make your thinking more profitable.

For any man all books may be divided into two classes, those that agree with him, and those that disagree with him. And this is just the way we put it; we do not naturally say, "I agree with him," but "He agrees with me," "He does not agree with me." Later on he may win us over to his way of thinking, but the first discovery that a reader makes is that the new thought is like or unlike his own. Shall one read books that agree with him or the other kind? Read both kinds.

Read those that agree with you, but not to fix you in your opinion stubbornly; the rather to see how your own faiths that have been satisfactory to you, but which have seemed to you to be a monopoly of your own, and to others to share your own smallness, reach out and bear fruit of which you never dreamed. In reading such books you touch shoulders and join forces with a great army of men who are of like aspiration with yourself, men who by some accident of equipment are more in the public eye, or better able to express with inspiration to others the truth you and they hold in common.

Read books of men with whom you do not agree. Read them, but not necessarily to combat them. It is not of vital importance that all men should be brought to our way of thinking. It is important and very important that my thinking and your thinking should truthfully represent the best impulses and the dominant purpose of our lives, and in turn that with our growth in moral power and in righteousness there should come added power of expression.

Read the books of men who do not agree with you, and do not be scared out of doing so by fear of adverse comment or fear that you will be won over to their way of thinking. Either fear is cowardly. Do it in order to discover with what your own view has to measure its strength.

There is much said in these days about the value of stereographs. An object is seen better by two eyes than by one. You look a bit around the corner, you see more of it. It stands out better from the background. So with you and your author. Looking from different angles you

and he see different sides of the object, and by reading his views you gain for yours clearness of definition and correctness.

“Accept his views?” The form of the question is objectionable. Accepting views belongs to the boy. He accepts his teacher’s views, and the statement of his textbook, but in most cases they do not become his own. They are stored in the memory, perhaps can be rehearsed on call, but they do not become a part of the boy’s own equipment. For the minister to accept another’s views in that sense is to surrender his birthright, to forget his prerogative as a full grown man. It may be that he and you will come to hold views that are in the main identical, but his will be his, and yours will be yours, cast in the mould of your own mental processes and bearing the marks of being your own legitimate product. It is yours without fear of the charge of plagiarism; yours because your own experience leads you thither.

What a fair world this would be if only infallible utterances found their way into print! Or at least how different it would be! Unfortunately even the colorless statements of fact cannot always be relied upon as true. It is entirely reasonable, and even within the limits of proper modesty for a plain every day minister to challenge the truth of a writer’s statement. Do his observations correspond with yours? Has he interpreted the facts correctly? A minister should be so trained, if not in a seminary course, at least by the schooling of his practical life, that he can estimate the value of another man’s observations. Read to be able to add his laboratory to yours, and from the two to make a safer generalization.

Do you ask still what should be the attitude of your mind to a book with which you do not agree? If the book were wholly vicious, it would be proper to read it, if at all, in an attitude of uniform hostility. But if it were such a book you would not read it. If you do read it, you raise it thereby to a somewhat dignified position. It will not do to say only hostile things of a book which nevertheless you are reading. There are Americans living abroad, who seem to be unable to say anything good of the land or the city of their sojourn, and insult its citizens in public and in private by derogatory remarks, although they continue their stay there year after year. Why do you read the book at all? Because others are reading it? Then there must be some element in it which makes it popular. What it is you should discover. It cannot be wholly bad. The paper or the type may be good! Or it may have the merit of brevity! But more than that; a man does not say, "Go to now, I will write a book that shall be utterly mischievous, filled with lies and void of good, an evil influence from cover to cover." The result may be well nigh that, but in the writer's purpose there was something else, and for this reason again, there is some respect due even a poor book.

But again, cherished hostility makes it almost impossible to be fair; it blinds the eyes as surely as does love. It is a crime against yourself, for it dulls the intellect and prevents the full exercise of your mental powers. The only way is to put one's self for the time being into at least so much of sympathy with the writer as not to misjudge him. Pick out the good, the more carefully if

there is little of it, and throw the rest away. You read for strength and breadth, and many a book that is not wholly right will give you that.

It is a simple belief of a child that everybody whom he admires is thoroughly admirable. It is a childish fancy that a book must be valuable, for otherwise it would not be in existence. By and by the child discovers a slight flaw in the character of his acquaintance, as he himself grows to surpass him in education, in politeness, in ambition. So it is in the case of books. A man grows sleepy over a book; he at first chides himself as at fault, but discovers by and by that it is the book that is dull. He feels a little ill at ease and self conscious in reading a novel and he discovers that its language is vulgar; its moral effect is not correct and he despises it. Our earlier attitude of reverence for everything that is a book gives place to a critical attitude of mind. It is a rude awakening but it is a healthy process, and the result is salutary. In the case of religious books the awakening comes tardily if at all; for we shun any appearance of adverse criticism of what is done in even the outermost courts of the temple. We think every avowedly religious book is a good book, every Sunday school book is a good book, and every Sunday school hymnal! But we learn better after a time and it does us good to learn better though it costs a sigh.

Still this must not sour us toward literature, real or alleged, of which we do not wholly approve. People write and influence, and people read and are influenced, and we can get something profitable out of anything that comes from the heart of a brother man.

And remember that the minister has one grand safeguard against the vagaries and errors of another as he has against infidelity; it is his practical work. He has no time to waste on nonsense. There are great interests in his keeping. He cannot afford to go off on a tangent. He must hold himself together. The cranky book does not affect him as it would if he had not this balance-wheel of serious earnest work.

My main purpose is accomplished if I have brought it home to the minister that his training does not entirely or chiefly antedate his entry into the ministry but is coincident with it; that it is not so much training for the ministry as training in and by the ministry; that this process is not necessarily antagonized by his busy pastorate; but is properly based upon it and furthered by it; that books and reading furnish him the principal aid to be had from outside; but that it is after all for himself to secure by his own efforts, and not as a donation from another.

Whatever assistance he may have, and he ought to have much, from school and library and associates in the ministry, he must stand on his own feet and say resolutely, "I will steadily increase my mental powers and efficiency." Whatever drawbacks he may have, and discouragements and disappointments, there is nothing that can prevent a man from a continuous growth in ability, until old age or infirmity warns him that his work is well nigh done.

It is really a moral question for him, a question of duty to man and God. His work, which really engrosses so much of his time, which involves so much drudgery, which brings him so few of this

world's treasures, is after all the most pleasant that a loving heavenly father can bestow. No other has in it so much inspiration and joy. This is a truism, repeated often by every true pastor. But a little below the obvious thought lies another. This occupation of the Christian minister is of such character as to stimulate greatly his mental growth. No man can deal with human nature as a minister does and must, without being influenced for good thereby. He is in a position to gain great mental strength by his work. We are told that this is an age of psychology. Why use so long a word? This is the age of men. Men are the objects of study in these years. Men are at the front, men of character and power. And men are and must be studied diligently in order to place them at their best for grand achievement. No one on earth has better opportunity to study men at first hand than the Christian minister. The great problems of the day are problems of man, of his mental and moral nature. Whether these problems are classified as international, or national, or social, or industrial, or religious (if indeed there be any such not embraced among the others mentioned), the minister of Jesus Christ can say, humbly as he sees himself, proudly as he views his office, Christ holds the solution of the problem in his gospel of salvation to the uttermost, and I am his minister.

He comes face to face with the soul in its supreme moments, at times when the dead level of its ordinary movements is interrupted by the sudden or the extreme, and if he would be a healer and not a bungler, he must know man in

all his moods. This is mentally taxing. No wonder that Monday finds a man weary, and Saturday often fails to rest him. No wonder that now and then a man breaks down; that one and another is staggered by the seriousness of the tasks.

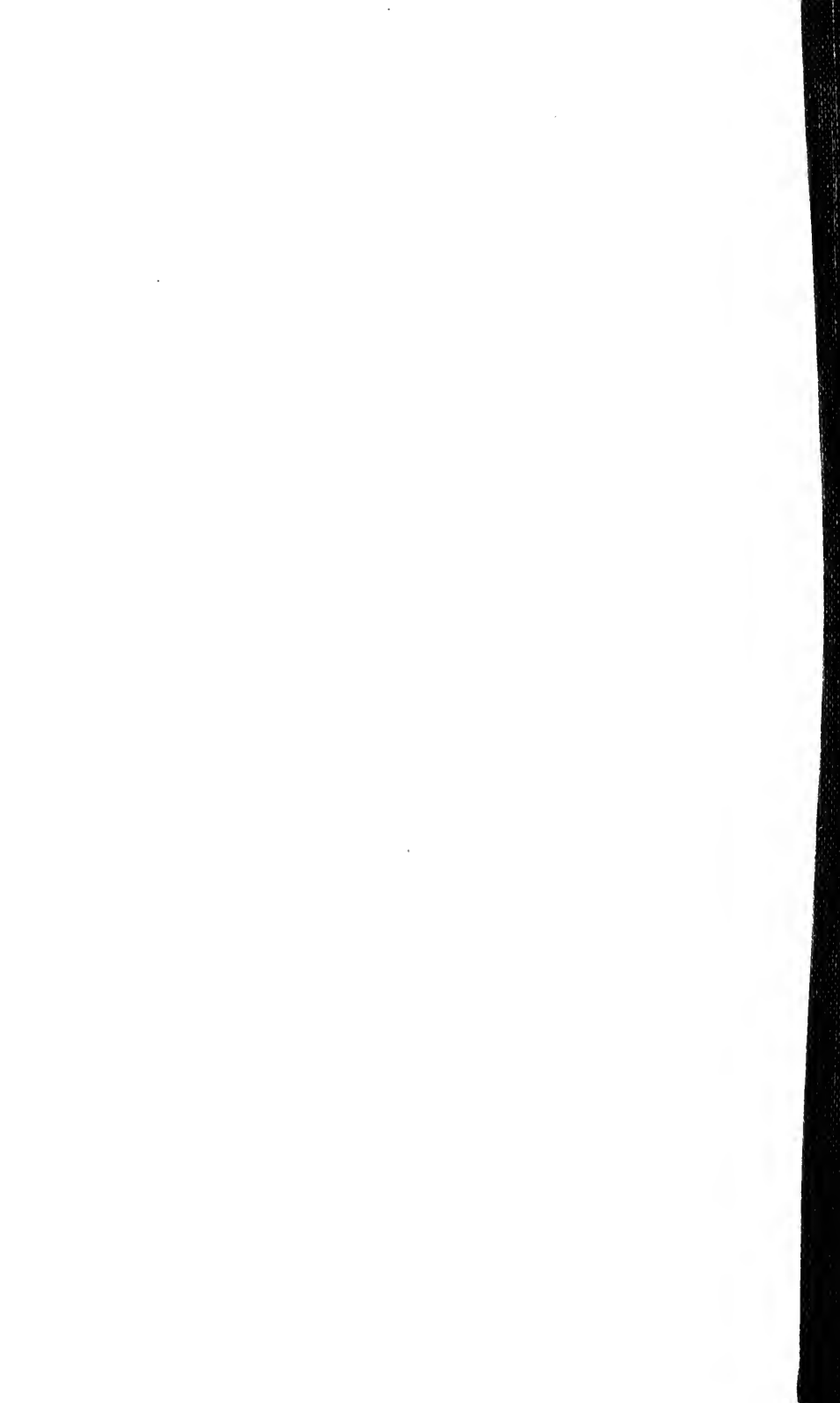
And yet just here lies his education. Those very persons whose spiritual experiences are so much in evidence, whose cry for help, or whose gratitude for help, is constantly in our ears, constitute our text book. It is in the handling of these souls that we gain our wisdom and strength. We may read books, we may go to school, but only as a means of widening our experience, and not as a substitute for it. And probably a man who will not find inspiration to growth from these rich fields of labor and observation, will not be greatly strengthened in other ways. We owe it to ourselves, and to our master to make use of the opportunities that lie about us.

And our obligation is deeper than that, and more fundamental. We are ministers, but first we are Christians. We are actors, but first we are acted upon. We are producers, but first products. We bring others under the spell of divine truth; we have ourselves first come under its influence. What has been and what is its effect upon us? We approach a poor wretch, vile, filthy, wrecked, and tell him we believe Jesus Christ can redeem his life. How about ourselves? What is the basis of our great confidence in the power of Christ over human life? Surely not some single momentary experience of bygone years. We dare not speak confidently unless the process of redemption is continuous in us. Christ has not done with us, we are not yet splen-

did examples of his redeeming work finished. Rather we are yet in the making. This work of grace within us concerns the Christian virtues, but of these we do not speak. It concerns just as truly our mental growth and strengthening. To be sure, we cannot exactly be born again mentally, but there is so much of the moral in mental development, and so much of the mental in moral development, that the one as well as the other is within the proper sphere of Christ's influence. Think of the marvels that Christianity accomplishes on missionary fields, of the raising of the Hindoo outcaste to the intellectual level of the Brahman within a generation or two, of mental ability exhibited by children of slaves in the South. If this is true, and of course it is, where are the triumphs of the cross in our own persons? It is a sin to be handling so constantly the precious truths of the Christian religion, to preach salvation to every one else, and at the same time to content ourselves with mediocre mental ability, and unambitious acquisition.

Is the pulpit losing its intellectual supremacy? We hear that it is. If by intellectual supremacy is meant the monopoly of stores of information upon various subjects, it is doubtless as true as it was inevitable, that it should lose it. But we mean rather the power that goes with knowledge. Granted that other men are exhibiting more and more of this power as the generations pass; esteem it rather a mark of the intellectual supremacy of the ministry which has led the world in this development, than a token of degeneracy of today. And yet the thoughtful man will consider very seriously whether there is not

a danger that the grand heritage of the past will not be passed on undiminished to another generation. There is no need that the pulpit lose its supremacy. There is every reason why it should not. It is in the keeping, not of a few conspicuous men, but of the many inconspicuous men in the service. It rests with each man to show his superiority. He should prove in his own life that he lives longer and is healthier because he is a minister; that his intellect is keener every day; that his mental power is better preserved as he grows old; that he has his learning more fully under his control; that his judgments of men and methods are more correct; that his sympathies are broader and more genuine; that his optimism is more unclouded; that his faith is supreme. The man who exhibits such fruits of his ministry has a liberal education.



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